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ABSTRACT

This digest discusses some of the major trends and issues found in a systematic content review of the professional literature of library and information science. Two "megatrends" are identified and discussed: (1) the concern for the impact of technology upon every facet of library work, in academic, school, public, and special libraries; and (2) the continued focus on the user and the impact of specific developments on the user. The digest also identifies and discusses the following trends: (1) the increasing demand for and provision of end-user access to computer-based information resources; (2) the increasing use of networks and telecommunications by all types of libraries; (3) the continued growth in computer-based information sources revolving around CD-ROM technology; (4) the increasing focus on collection management activities to enable libraries to better meet the general goals of institutions as well as the specific needs of users; (5) the increasing concern of libraries with reaching out to new user groups; and (6) libraries' focus on the promotion of literacy. (10 references) (MAB)

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Trends and Issues in Library and Information Science 1990

ERIC Digest

by

Mary Alice Brennan

This digest is based on *Trends and Issues in Library and Information Science 1990* by Michael B. Eisenberg, Kathleen L. Spitzer, Ilana Kingsley, and Christine Darby.

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Trends & Issues in Library & Information Science 1990

by Mary Alice Brennan

This digest is based on *Trends and Issues in Library and Information Science 1990*, by Michael B. Eisenberg, Kathleen L. Spitzer, Ilana Kingsley, and Christine Darby.*

In order to identify and document the pervasive trends in the field of library and information science, a systematic content review of the professional literature was performed. The literature examined was published during the two-year period from October 1, 1988 to September 30, 1990, and included journals, conference proceedings, input into the ERIC document collection (announced in *Resources in Education)*, annuals and yearbooks, and dissertations.

This digest will discuss some of the top trends found in the content review. For a full discussion of the study methodology and findings, the reader is referred to Eisenberg, Spitzer, Kingsley, and Darby, 1990.

Megatrends

The literature review revealed two "megatrends." First and foremost is a concern for the impact of technology. Every facet of library work, in academic, school, public, and special libraries, is being transformed as a result of technological advances. Among the changes are: increased database access through CD-ROMs, local mainframes, or dial-up services; a shift in the focus of library instruction toward skills for using computer-based information systems; and the provision of access to local collections for remote users, and to remote collections for local users.

The second "megatrend," also observed in an earlier study (Eisenberg, Trombley, & Ruth, 1988), is the continued focus on the user and the impact of specific developments on the user. Throughout the literature, whether the topic is collections, staff, budget, or facilities, there is a clear emphasis on implications for users. The literature on technology focuses on end-user interaction, user-friendly systems and features, and the development of systems to meet diverse user needs.

TREND: There is an increasing demand for and provision of end-user access to computer-based information resources.

The frequent appearance of the two phrases "end-user" and "user-friendly" in library and information science literature reflects a growing concern for facilitating access to computer-based information systems. As end-user searching has become more prevalent, there is a focus on: (1) systems design for ease of use; and (2) instructional efforts to facilitate end-user searching. Online searchers in the Southern California Online Users' Group (SCOUG) have made system design suggestions which include the provision of a common command language for all databases and the availability of detailed database descriptions online rather than just in print format. Other recommendations for the improvement of computer-based information resources include the addition of query-in-depth help and context sensitive help, error, and prompting messages to inform users when they have made a syntactic error. End-user searching could also be facilitated through the development of hypermedia interfaces and the inclusion of graphic interfaces.

TREND: Libraries of all types are increasing their use of networks and telecommunications.

The benefits of library network participation are three-fold. It allows libraries to: (1) share human and material resources (thereby saving time and money); (2) improve collection management through collaboration; and (3) increase interaction with others to share decision making (Immroth, 1984). Both wide area networks (WANS) and local area networks (LANS) are being implemented by libraries to improve services and management. The provision of network access, in turn, is generating a demand for the prompt delivery of information through such telecommunications technologies as telefacsimile (fax), which is a popular means for transmitting interlibrary loan (ILL) requests and materials. Libraries are also concerned about their role in the proposed National Research and Education Network (NREN), a "high-capacity electronic highway of interconnected networks linking business, industry, government, and the education and library communities" (Parkhurst, 1990, p.ix).

TREND: Growth in computer-based information sources continues to revolve around CD-ROM technology.

The decreasing production costs and the ease and low cost of adapting existing hardware platforms to make use of CD-ROM are some factors which are contributing to CD-ROM's popularity. In addition to bibliographic databases, electronic resources now available on CD-ROM include online catalogs, full-text reference and periodical sources, and numerical databases. The implementation of telecommunications access and networking has also improved CD-ROM timeliness, database availability, and multiuser access. Advances in networking hardware and software make it possible to group CD-ROMs in a "tower" and provide access through a local area network (LAN). This approach is being successfully imple-

mented in school library media centers, academic libraries, and public libraries.

TREND: There is an increasing focus on collection management activities to enable libraries to better meet the general goals of institutions as well as the specific needs of users.

Three prominent issues related to collection management are currently found in the literature. The first issue focuses on physical space, preservation, and financial problems as major concerns of libraries with special collections, rare books, and archives. It is suggested that libraries evaluate the importance of such collections in terms of the academic goals of the host institution and the users' needs and interests, and turn to resource sharing or cooperative collection development if necessary.

A second issue concerns the sharing of collection management information. Numerous manuals have been published to help information professionals make their collections responsive to user needs. These manuals cover such topics as user needs and surveys, selection and weeding processes, physical space planning, and general collection management. Workshops and seminars on these topics have been offered at major conferences. Manuals and workshops have also offered guidance in managing specialized research collections in different subject areas and for particular media.

The third issue involves the need for the formation of working liaisons between faculty members and librarians in both school library media centers and academic libraries. In the case of schools, media specialists need to gain sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to develop and manage their collections for integration with content area instruction. In academic settings, faculty/librarian liaisons can lead to better coordination between library services and coursework.

TREND: Beyond maintenance of existing services, libraries are increasingly concerned with reaching out to new user groups.

Demographic changes, as well as the specific needs of special groups (e.g., minorities, immigrants, young adults, latchkey children, the elderly, the disabled, and the disadvantaged), have caused libraries to expand existing services and create new services aimed at diverse audiences. Many urban public libraries are attempting to meet the needs of immigrants through expanded collections, rotating collections of foreign language books and periodicals, English-language instruction, career counseling, and multicultural programming. The "Guidelines for Library Service to Older Adults," published by the Library Service to an Aging Population Committee of the American Library Association's Reference and Adult Services Division, promotes library services which are appropriate to this previously neglected segment of society. At issue, however, is the question of how financially-strained libraries can ensure equal access to information resources and services for all users.

TREND: Consistent with national interests, libraries are focusing on the promotion of literacy.

Literacy continues to be a major focus of libraries. Programs such as intergenerational tutoring, outreach programs to day care centers, and programs to promote reading have all been areas of recent library involvement. The "Night of a Thousand Stars" (April 25, 1990) was one successful nationwide program initiated by the American Association of School Librarians which focused on literacy and lifelong learning. During this ~~event school~~ and public libraries across the country arranged appearances by local and national celebrities to encourage reading. The first national literacy forum, "Strengthening the Literacy Network," was prompted by the National Goals for Education adopted by President Bush and state governors in 1989. Recommendations resulting from the forum include: (1) incorporating the concept of the library as an educational agency into legislation; (2) developing a stable literacy funding strategy; (3) continuing to improve the evaluation, research, and dissemination of library-based literacy efforts; and (4) redirecting administrative responsibilities for LSCA titles related to literacy directly to the state library agency (Quezada, 1990, p.24).

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